

Consequently, GE relies heavily on the U.S. patent system. I have been very happy to work with Mr. Immelt and GE as strong proponents of bipartisan patent reform legislation.

I recently met with Mr. Immelt and was impressed by his determination to make GE even more competitive in the future than it has been in the past. He has original ideas on investing in research and development and understands that reviving and updating America's manufacturing economy is critical to creating jobs in this country. I have always been impressed with his commitment to manufacturing in Rutland, VT, where GE Aviation has a major plant.

In honor of his willingness to serve in this new capacity, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD Mr. Immelt's recent op-ed, "A blueprint for keeping America competitive."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 21, 2011]

A BLUEPRINT FOR KEEPING AMERICA
COMPETITIVE

(By Jeffrey R. Immelt)

President Obama has asked me to chair his new President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. I have served for the past two years on the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board, and I look forward to leading the next phase of this effort as we transition from recovery to long-term growth. The president and I are committed to a candid and full dialogue among business, labor and government to help ensure that the United States has the most competitive and innovative economy in the world.

Business leaders should provide expertise in service of our country. My predecessors at GE have done so, as have leaders of many other great American companies. There is always a healthy tension between the public and private sectors. However, we all share a responsibility to drive national competitiveness, particularly during economic unrest. This is one of those times.

My hope is that the council will be a sounding board for ideas and a catalyst for action on jobs and competitiveness. It will include small and large businesses, labor, economists and government. Areas that we will focus on include:

Manufacturing and exports: We need a coordinated commitment among business, labor and government to expand our manufacturing base and increase exports. The assumption made by many that the United States could transition from a technology-based, export-oriented economic powerhouse to a services-led, consumption-based economy without any serious loss of jobs, prosperity or prestige was fundamentally wrong. But there is nothing inevitable about America's declining manufacturing competitiveness if we work together to reverse it. For example, we have returned many GE appliance manufacturing jobs to the States by collaborating with our unions and making our operations more efficient.

Working with Boeing CEO Jim McNerney, who leads the President's Export Council, the Council on Jobs and Competitiveness will look for ways to harness the power of international markets—home to more than 95 percent of the world's consumers. Currently, the United States ranks lowest among the world's largest manufacturing na-

tions in the ratio of domestically produced goods sold overseas, or export intensity. We must set as our highest economic priority not just increasing our exports, as the president has pledged, but also making the United States the world's leading exporter in the 21st century.

Free trade: America cannot expand its manufacturing base without reatly increasing the volume of goods it sells overseas. That is why I applaud the free-trade agreement recently concluded between the United States and South Korea, which will eliminate barriers to U.S. exports and support export-oriented jobs. We should seek to conclude trade and investment agreements with other fast-growing markets and modernize our systems for export finance and trade control. Those who advocate increasing domestic manufacturing jobs by erecting trade barriers have it exactly wrong.

Innovation: Businesses should invest more of their cash and resources in advanced products and technologies that will create jobs in the United States, and government should incentivize this investment in innovation. Today, GE is investing more than ever in research and development—about 6 percent of revenue—aimed at solving challenges in transportation, energy and health care. As one of America's largest exporters, GE remains committed to producing more products in the United States, which is our home and largest market. In the past two years, GE has created about 6,000 manufacturing jobs in the States, many resulting from investments in innovations such as advanced batteries, which we will make at our 100-year-old plant in Schenectady, N.Y.

GE sells more than 96 percent of its products to the private sector, where America's future must be built. But government can help business invest in our shared future. A sound and competitive tax system and a partnership between business and government on education and innovation in areas where America can lead, such as clean energy, are essential to sustainable growth.

It is possible to be a competitive global enterprise and still care about your home. In fact, it is not just possible but imperative. There is no easy solution to "fix" the American economy. Persistent and high unemployment—and the pessimism it breeds—should not be accepted. We must work together to construct an economy that creates more opportunity for more people.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL MICHAEL GEARY

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, it is with deep sadness that I rise to honor the life of LCpl Michael Geary, who died on December 8, 2010, from wounds received in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. He was just 20 years old at the time of his death, and 5 months into his first tour of duty as a Marine. Michael was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Lejeune, NC.

A native of Derry, NH, Michael graduated from Pinkerton Academy in June 2009. As early as age 14, he wanted to join the Marines. Michael left for boot camp in North Carolina just 1 month after graduating high school to fulfill his life-long dream.

Admirably, Michael wished to represent our country to the best of his

ability—so much so that, prior to his deployment, he studied Afghan culture in order to increase his cultural awareness and to communicate more effectively with the people of Afghanistan, especially Afghan youth.

Michael is described by his loved ones as loyal, good-natured, and driven. From attaining his black belt in karate to competing on the gridiron for the Pinkerton Astros, his drive was truly inspiring. His family attributes the personal growth of his younger cousin, Luke, to Michael's relentless drive and his dedication to the ones he loved. Michael is Luke's hero. This young patriot is also a hero to the State of New Hampshire and our entire country.

LCpl Michael Geary made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of the country he loved and for that he has earned our enduring gratitude. I hope his family can find comfort in knowing that all Americans share a deep appreciation for his heroic service.

Michael is survived by his parents, Timothy and Nancy Geary of Derry, NH. He also leaves behind a caring extended family and many dear friends. This young hero will be missed by all.

I ask my colleagues and all Americans to please join me in honoring the life, service and sacrifice of LCpl Michael Geary.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, tonight's State of the Union Address is a unique opportunity for the President to speak directly to the American people and offer his course for the country. The President is promoting trade as part of his agenda and I commend him for highlighting global competitiveness as an economic imperative. With the upcoming debate on the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, the President has an opportunity to speak candidly with the American people about the benefits and challenges posed by trade. Doing this supports the case that the United States needs new policies to rise to the challenges of a global economy.

In order to avoid a divisive, ugly fight over trade, I would like to hear the President say in his speech that he will seek to establish a new compact between workers, business, and government about how to increase our competitiveness in the global economy. It is important to try to reach this consensus before Congress is asked to consider the controversial free-trade agreements, FTAs, reached with Korea, Colombia, and Panama.

The President has already begun down this path by ramping up efforts to combat unfair trade practices and establishing the National Export Initiative with the goal of doubling exports over the next 5 years. These are both important strategies. In approaching the pending FTAs, it is vital that he talk about more than just exports; he must also highlight the value of imports, two-way trade, and the